What is claimed:

1. A human prolactin-binding protein.

2. The human prolactin-binding protein of claim 1 which is isolated from human serum or milk.

3. The human prolactin-binding protein of claim 1 which is produced recombinantly.

4. A composition comprising the prolactin-binding protein of claim 1 and a pharmaceutically acceptable vehicle.

5. A method for modulating somatolactogenic function comprising administering to a cell or an animal the prolactin-binding protein of claim 1.

6. A method for modulating somatolactogenic function comprising administering to a cell or an animal the composition of claim 4.

7. A method of inhibiting Nb2 cells comprising contacting Nb2 cells with the prolactin-binding protein of claim 1.

8. A method of inhibiting Nb2 cells compromising contacting Nb2 cells with the composition of claim 4.

9. A method for diagnosing disease or conditions associated with somatolactogenic function comprising:

obtaining a biological sample from a patient;

determining the level of the prolactin-binding protein of claim 1 in the biological sample; and

comparing the determined level in the patient with the level in a biological sample from a normal individual, wherein levels of the prolactin-binding protein are lower than the level in normal individuals are indicative of disease or conditions wherein somatolactogenic function must be augmented and higher levels than in the normal individual are indicative of disease and conditions in which somatolactogenic function must be inhibited.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein levels of the prolactin-binding protein are determined via an immunoassay using an anti-PRLBP antibody.